

## **Redistricting/Consolidation Advisory Committee Minutes**

**Wednesday, February 6, 2008**

**Dr. Horoschak greeted the committee members and observers in attendance. He informed the audience that he is working with the district's technology coordinator to establish a website where members of the public can post their opinions regarding developing plans. Speaking of the process, Dr. Horoschak said the committee was charged by the school committee to review feasible options of school consolidation and/or redistricting. Dr. Horoschak will forward the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to the school committee at its' March 11, 2008 meeting. Public hearings will be held, as required, prior to the school committee taking action. Dr. Horoschak stated that a final decision will likely be announced at the April school committee meeting.**

**Dr. Horoschak introduced Ann Clarke, Senior Vice-President of Engineering, Planning and Environmental Management Systems of the Rhode Island Airport Commission, and Mark Carruolo, City Planner, both in attendance to report to the Advisory Committee on the status of airport expansion plans and the impact they may have on homes in the area. Paul Janssen, Construction Coordinator, provided a summary of Ms. Clarke's and Mr. Carruolo's statements, which is attached to the minutes. Ms. Clarke referred the committee to the airport website, [www.pvdairport.com](http://www.pvdairport.com) for complete updates on**

their progress and provided her telephone number at RIAC (401 737-4000 Ext. 419) for committee members with additional questions.

Dr. Horoschak thanked both Mr. Carruolo and Ms. Clarke for their remarks to the committee and stated that consolidation and redistricting should be considered in both short and long term to plan the most effective use of facilities to support an exemplary educational environment.

On February 14th, Superintendent Horoschak will update the school committee on work of the Advisory Committee. Also at the February 14th school committee meeting the decision will be made as to which school personnel will receive layoff notices. The WTU contract limits layoffs of its membership to twenty personnel, although forty notices may be sent to members of the union. The deadline for providing notice is March 1, 2008. Therefore, the consolidation planning will determine which twenty staff members will actually be laid off.

Dr. Horoschak suggested that the committee formalize the criteria to be used in choosing the consolidation option to be recommended to the school committee. He offered the following criteria for consideration:

1. The resulting configuration must accommodate the RIDE regulations for school improvement.
2. Students from schools that are consolidated should remain in the same junior and senior high school feeder zones.
3. Maximum savings achieved from reducing personnel reductions,

transportation costs, building operation costs, and the deferment of expenditures for renovation and safety code compliance.

4. Consideration of contingency plans regarding airport expansion and housing development.

The district administration is required to submit a balanced budget for the 2008-09 school year. Currently the shortfall is estimated between 6-9 million dollars if programs and operations next year were to remain the same as this year. The Governor has called for flat state funding for public education. This shortfall takes into account inflation and increases dictated by negotiated contracts. Next year appropriation to the schools from the City is capped at a maximum of 5% over this year's appropriation. A reduction of approximately \$250,000 in the federal government reimbursement for Medicaid expenditures is expected. If these revenue projections hold up, expenditures of approximately 6 million dollars will need to be achieved to submit a balanced 2008-2009 school district budget.

Dr. D'Agostino distributed a packet which contained his subcommittee's minutes, agenda and reports on the impact of closing Wickes elementary school. The reports included information pertaining to Cedar Hill, Drum Rock, Greenwood, Potowomut, Robertson, Scott, Wickes, Lippitt, and Park elementary schools. His committee's charge was to exam the Wickes elementary school for consolidation into

neighboring feeder schools. The committee focused on five main

**factors for each elementary school: current enrollment, student capacity, current usage of space, consolidation availability by number of students; and school operating efficiency by percent.**

**The Winman Area Subcommittee concluded:**

- 1. To maximize the use of any school at 100% would limit the flexibility in the building. Research has shown that schools run most efficiently at 90% usage.**
- 2. It is possible for Cedar Hill School to absorb the students from Potowomut.**
- 3. It was not possible for Wickes School to close and keep all students in Winman feeder schools.**
- 4. It was possible for Wickes to close and send students to other feeder school attendance zones.**
- 5. Recommend the number of students transferred from the Winman feeder zone be given the option of continuing on to Winman Junior High School and Toll Gate High School.**

**Members of the Advisory Committee expressed some discontent to Dr. Horoschak. Among the comments were: Disappointment in the recent rumors circulating and heard from the public that Drum Rock and other schools have been designated to close. Another member commented that she feels very uncomfortable, frustrated and insulted in getting news through the newspaper. She does not feel the committee is discussing amongst themselves to find the best solution for consolidation. Dr. Horoschak requested that the**

committee proceed with some tolerance of ambiguity as the process moves forward. For example, some members of the school committee inquired if more money could be saved by closing three junior high schools, and requested Dr. Horoschak look into this option. It was determined that this is not feasible or practical educationally. Dr. Horoschak said that steps have been taken to provide the public with information as soon as it is developed. The goal is to keep this process transparent so that the committee does not end up making a decision which the public has not heard. He assured everyone that all data will be provided to the Advisory Committee to analyze. While researching the possible closing of the junior high schools, Dr. Horoschak stated, it became clear that the students from the four elementary schools, Drum Rock, Greene, Rhodes, and Potowomut, can be consolidated into schools within their feeder zones. Maps showing current elementary school attendance zones will be made available to members of the Advisory Committee.

A member asked how many students are in the senior high schools. Dr. Mercurio said between 1100 and 1300, with Pilgrim having the largest enrollment and Toll Gate the lowest.

A committee member complimented Dr. D'Agostino's and the work of his committee. She asked to see a financial report on how much money would be saved under each plan. Another member asked which special education programs will be impacted. Dr. D'Agostino

**spoke about the Wickes School, stating it houses a jump start program, a therapeutic program, an integrated kindergarten program, and a preschool program. Those are district services which could be placed at other facilities, but it is difficult to split them up as all those programs utilize the same psychologist and social worker. The placement of special education will be considered when analyzing the impact of consolidating schools.**

**The next Redistricting/Consolidation Advisory Committee will be held on Wednesday, February 27, 2008 from 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm. The location is to be determined upon auditorium availability.**

**A letter from the Gorton Junior High School Student Council opposing the closing of junior high schools was read to the committee.**

**The meeting concluded at 5:05 pm.**